

Irish in Bridgeport

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Growth of Bridgeport

Irish in Bridgeport

Rec'd 12/29/38

[M.V. Rourke?]

Bridgeport District

[Jan. 17, 1939?]

[FRANCIS?,?], married twice, Roman Catholic, educated at [Grammar?] School in Bridgeport, resides [109?] Vine St. Bar-tender and Supervisor of Telephone Installation.

I was born in Johnpatrick, Belfast in 1860. All my family was born [there. ?] Father brought us all to Bridgeport in 1865, where he was a car-builder at the foot of [Leefer?] St. A beam fell on his head and injured him severely, and [when?] he was better we all went back to Belfast, because father could not [work. ?] That was in 1866. A car-builder was well trained and a fine workman. They [were?] engineers, carpenters, cabinet-makers and upholsterers, all in one. They get good pay, too.

Then we came back to Bridgeport in 1866 or '69, we lived on the corner of Congress St. and Main St., over the shoe shop. There were four families in the building; the [Dunns?], [?], Simons and us. We each had four rooms and we [bathed?] in a tub. The furniture was solid but not expensive.

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I went to school at the old Fulton St. school. There were a lot of Irish there then, and we had to stand up for our rights against the Yankees. They thought they owned the country. Then I see them now putting on airs and in the newspaper all the time, I have to laugh. Why, I can remember when [?] ————— didn't have a Sunday dress to her names. Her father was a clerk and just because they owned some property on Main and Fulton Sts. they thought they were God's chosen people. I remember how she laughed when Mary ————— burst into tears when she had to recite Patrick Henry's address. He was Irish and it was just what we all wanted at that time for Ireland.

We kids had a lot of fun skating at the foot of Congress St. and [bothering?] the Italian storekeepers and the Jews. [Musante?] and [Pauby?] had a store on Main St. where the [?] restaurant is now and did a good business. Later [?] moved to [Waterbury?].

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There were only Five Jewish families in Bridgeport In the '80's the Kleins, Lessers, [?,?] and [?].

The kids used to play in [????] (block [new bounded?] [?] Washington, Sanford, Barral and James Sts.). Father Synnet used to ride horse back around there and if he saw us up to any mischief he used to jump his horse right over the fence and chase us. I remember the [entennial?] [?] in 1876 and all the Irish societies with their [?] and [?].

My mother's name was smith and all her people like my father's were in Ireland. The Irish in Bridgeport strayed with the Irish. They didn't like the Yankees. They were too snooty. They didn't like it because the Irish were so prosperous. The Irish owned all the liquor places, shops and bought up a lot or property.

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In 1880 I went to work for Scotch's firm on the corner of [Main?] and [Congress?] Sts. There were four brothers and I worked for them for two years. In 1882 I went to work for an o'Connell, in his saloon.

A bartender was half the business in those days and you had to know how to [?] everybody. Everyone seemed to get on with me and I was always moving to a better saloon and taking my customers with me. [?] were very swell in those days. They had meals with all kinds of foreign foods and served in style. They all had big mirrors and paintings on the wall and it was good liquor we served to the pick of the town.

[Peter Fran?] met me one day and offered to set me up in business. I didn't go then but a few years later I had my own place and I used to get all my liquor from him. They made a lot of money setting men up in business and letting them buy the business on time.

I can remember when there were 600 saloons in Bridgeport and all doing well. Later I joined the telephone company because I knew all the Irish and could get them to have 'phones put in.

(FIRST INSTALLMENT - Very difficult informant. Nervous and suspicious. [Have?] much irrelevant information)